Gender and Cookery: Exploring Perceptions and Participation in Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) Tracks

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how gender perceptions influence student participation and experiences in the Cookery strand of the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track in Philippine senior high schools. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the research integrates quantitative data from 150 students with qualitative insights from 10 TVL Cookery teachers and 5 Gender and Development (GAD) coordinators. Findings reveal that while cookery remains a feminized specialization, students—particularly males—increasingly challenge traditional gender norms through personal interest and career aspirations. Statistical analysis confirms a significant association between gender and perceptions of cookery as a gendered field (χ^2 = 10.24, p = 0.006). Thematic analysis further highlights the role of teacher support, inclusive pedagogy, and institutional practices in shaping student agency. Despite persistent stereotypes, students view cookery as a valuable and employable skill, with many expressing entrepreneurial ambitions. The study underscores the need for gender-responsive curriculum reform and teacher training to foster equitable participation in vocational education. These findings contribute to the discourse on inclusive education and support the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.
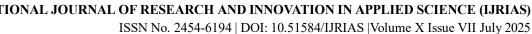
Keywords: Gender perceptions, TVL track, cookery education, vocational identity, inclusive pedagogy, GAD, gender equity, senior high school, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The integration of Gender and Development (GAD) principles into the Philippine K–12 curriculum reflects a national commitment to inclusive and equitable education. Yet, despite these policy efforts, gender disparities persist in the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track, particularly in the Cookery strand. Empirical studies (Hernandez, Garcia, & Talon, 2022; TESDA, 2019) consistently reveal that cookery remains a female-dominated specialization, while male students gravitate toward industrial and technical fields such as welding and automotive servicing. This gendered pattern of enrollment is not merely a reflection of individual preference but is deeply rooted in sociocultural norms that associate domestic skills with femininity and technical competence with masculinity.

Globally, vocational education systems have long been shaped by gendered assumptions about labor, skill, and identity (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2021; OECD, 2019). In the Philippine context, these assumptions are reinforced by institutional practices, limited gender sensitivity training, and the absence of inclusive pedagogical strategies (Francisco, 2021; Talon, Carreon, & Diragen, 2020). As a result, male students who express interest in cookery often face social stigma, while female students may internalize the belief that their vocational choices are limited to caregiving and culinary roles. These dynamics not only restrict individual agency but also undermine the broader goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).

Cookery, as a strand within the TVL track, offers more than just practical life skills—it holds significant potential for entrepreneurship, food innovation, and community development (Sapungan, 2025). However, its gendered perception may limit its transformative potential, particularly for male students whose participation is often constrained by cultural expectations. Moreover, the undervaluation of domestic skills in formal education

reflects a broader societal devaluation of feminized labor, a theme echoed in feminist economic theory (Feminist Economics, 2023).

This study seeks to explore how gender perceptions influence students' participation and experiences in the Cookery strand of the TVL track in Philippine senior high schools. By examining the lived experiences, motivations, and institutional contexts that shape these choices, the research aims to contribute to the growing discourse on gender equity in vocational education. Specifically, it investigates how teacher attitudes, curriculum design, and school culture either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles, and how these factors affect students' career aspirations and self-concept.

In doing so, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature: the intersection of gender, vocational identity, and educational equity in the Global South. It also offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers seeking to create more inclusive and gender-responsive TVL programs. To deepen this analysis, the study draws on Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) to understand how gender, motivation, and social identity intersect in shaping vocational choices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively explore how gender perceptions influence student participation and experiences in the Cookery strand of the TVL track. This design enables the triangulation of numerical trends and lived experiences, enhancing the validity and depth of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Component: A structured survey was administered to measure gender-based perceptions, motivations, and participation patterns.

Qualitative Component: Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to capture nuanced insights from students, teachers, and GAD coordinators.

Participants and Sampling

Target Respondents:

Primary: Senior High School students enrolled in the TVL–Cookery strand

Secondary: TVL Cookery teachers and school GAD coordinators

Sampling Technique: A stratified purposive sampling method was employed to ensure representation across:

Gender (male, female, non-binary if applicable)

Grade level (Grade 11 and 12)
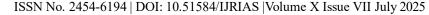
School type (public and private)

Sample Size:

Students: 150 respondents for the survey

Teachers: 10 for interviews

GAD Coordinators: 5 for institutional perspectives

Research Instruments

Survey Questionnaire (Quantitative): A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated constructs from prior studies (e.g., TESDA, 2019; Francisco, 2021). It included:

Demographic profile

Likert-scale items on gender perceptions, motivations, and participation

Items on institutional and teacher influence

Interview Guide (Qualitative): Semi-structured interview protocols were used to explore:

Gender-inclusive teaching strategies

Observed gender dynamics in cookery classes

Institutional practices promoting or hindering gender equity

Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were administered in person or via secure online platforms, depending on school access and consent.

Interviews and FGDs were conducted face-to-face or virtually, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Ethical clearance was secured from the appropriate institutional review board (IRB), and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis:

Statistical Tool: Chi-Square Test of Independence

Purpose: To determine the association between gender and strand selection, perceptions of cookery, and participation levels

Software: SPSS or equivalent statistical software

Qualitative Analysis:

Approach: Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Process:

Initial coding of transcripts

Identification of recurring themes related to gender, participation, and institutional influence

Cross-validation with quantitative findings for convergence or divergence

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures.

Data were anonymized and securely stored.

Ethical approval was obtained before data collection.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gendered Perceptions in Vocational Education

Gender stereotypes continue to shape students' educational and career trajectories, particularly in technical-vocational education. In the Philippine context, TESDA's (2019) Gender Profile of the TVET Sector revealed that female students are overrepresented in caregiving and cookery, while male students dominate industrial and technical fields. This pattern reflects broader societal norms that associate domestic skills with femininity and technical competence with masculinity (Francisco, 2021; Soliman, 2024). Internationally, similar trends have been observed, with UNESCO-UNEVOC (2021) and the OECD (2019) reporting persistent gender segregation in vocational education across both developed and developing countries.

Theoretical frameworks such as Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) help explain how these perceptions are internalized and reinforced. These frameworks highlight how gendered expectations intersect with cultural, economic, and institutional factors to influence students' confidence, motivation, and career aspirations.

Participation Patterns in the Cookery Strand

Multiple studies confirm that cookery remains a female-dominated strand within the TVL track (Hernandez, Garcia, & Talon, 2022; Research Publish, 2022). Cias (2022) and Corotan & Chavez (2024) found that female students often choose cookery due to early socialization and familial influence, while male students are discouraged by peers and societal expectations. The study by Xavier University (2023) highlighted that career aspirations and parental guidance significantly affect strand selection, often reinforcing traditional gender roles.

Globally, the Journal of Vocational Education & Training and Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education have documented similar gendered enrollment patterns, underscoring the need for systemic reforms to address these disparities.
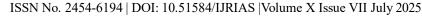
Institutional and Pedagogical Influences

Institutional practices and teacher attitudes play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging gender norms. Talon, Carreon, and Diragen (2020) conducted a phenomenological inquiry revealing that many TVL teachers lack training in gender-responsive pedagogy. Francisco (2021) and the DepEd Cookery Manual (2019) also noted that while GAD principles are embedded in policy, their classroom implementation remains inconsistent.

Studies from MIJRD (Sapungan, 2025) and Humanities Journal (2025) emphasize the importance of inclusive teaching strategies and project-based learning in promoting equitable participation. Teachers who actively challenge stereotypes and use gender-inclusive language contribute to more balanced classroom dynamics (MomentsLog, 2023; MIJRD, 2024). However, gaps remain in curriculum content, assessment tools, and institutional support systems.

Student Experiences and Identity Formation

The lived experiences of students in the Cookery strand reveal the complex interplay between gender identity, self-perception, and educational engagement. Olaguer & Pelayo (2023) found that male students often experience marginalization in female-dominated cookery classes, while female students may internalize the belief that their vocational options are limited to domestic roles.

These findings align with global literature from Gender and Society and Sex Roles, which document how vocational education can either reinforce or disrupt traditional gender identities. Participation in cookery can also reshape students' perceptions of gender roles in both domestic and professional contexts (MomentsLog, 2023; Rinonos, 2024).

Implications for Employment and Entrepreneurship

Cookery education holds significant potential for economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, particularly for marginalized groups. Rinonos (2024) and the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship (2023) argue that culinary skills can be leveraged for small business development, especially when paired with innovation and digital literacy.

However, the undervaluation of feminized labor remains a barrier. Feminist Economics (2023) highlights how domestic skills are often excluded from formal economic metrics, despite their contribution to household and community well-being. Addressing this gap requires both curricular reform and broader societal recognition of the value of care and culinary work. Integrating entrepreneurship modules and showcasing successful male and female culinary entrepreneurs can help elevate the strand's perceived value.

Policy and Global Frameworks

Several international frameworks advocate for gender equity in education, including SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). UNESCO-UNEVOC (2021) and the International Journal of Educational Development emphasize the need for gender-sensitive curriculum design, teacher training, and institutional accountability.

Locally, TESDA's GAD initiatives and DepEd's policy mandates provide a foundation for reform, but implementation gaps persist. Studies by Francisco (2021) and Talon et al. (2020) call for stronger monitoring mechanisms and capacity-building programs to ensure that gender equity is not only a policy ideal but a classroom reality.

RESULTS

Section A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Out of 150 senior high school students surveyed:

Sex:

Female: 92 (61.3%)

Male: 56 (37.3%)

Prefer not to say: 2 (1.3%)

Age:

Mean age: 17.2 years

Age range: 16–19 years

Grade Level:

Grade 11: 78 (52%)

Grade 12: 72 (48%)

School Type:

Public: 117 (78%)

Private: 33 (22%)

Previous TVL Strand Taken:

Yes: 38 (25.3%)

No: 112 (74.7%)

Career Plans in Culinary/Food Industry:

Yes: 68 (45.3%)

No: 41 (27.3%)

Undecided: 41 (27.3%)

Section B: Perceptions of Gender and Cookery

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Cookery is more suitable for females than males.	3.42	1.12	Neutral to Slightly Agree
2. I chose cookery because I enjoy cooking regardless of gender.	4.31	0.78	Strongly Agree
3. Society expects women to be better at cooking than men.	4.12	0.91	Agree
4. Male students are often discouraged from taking cookery.	3.89	1.03	Agree
5. Cookery is a valuable skill for both men and women.	4.72	0.51	Strongly Agree
6. I feel confident pursuing cookery even if it is seen as gendered.	4.08	0.86	Agree

Interpretation: The data reveal a complex yet evolving landscape of gender perceptions surrounding the Cookery strand. The mean score for the statement "Cookery is more suitable for females than males" (M = 3.42, SD = 1.12) suggests that while students are aware of prevailing gender stereotypes, their agreement is moderate and not absolute. This neutrality may reflect a transitional mindset, where traditional norms persist but are increasingly questioned, particularly among younger generations.

Strong agreement with the statement "I chose cookery because I enjoy cooking regardless of gender" (M = 4.31, SD = 0.78) indicates that personal interest is a dominant motivator, transcending gendered expectations. This finding aligns with the principles of Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), which posits that students are more likely to engage in academic tasks they value and believe they can succeed in, regardless of societal norms.

The perception that "Society expects women to be better at cooking than men" (M = 4.12, SD = 0.91) and that "Male students are often discouraged from taking cookery" (M = 3.89, SD = 1.03) confirms the persistence of gendered socialization. These beliefs are consistent with Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which explains how societal expectations shape individual behavior and career choices. The relatively high standard deviations for these items also suggest variability in how these norms are experienced across different contexts and identities.

Encouragingly, the highest-rated item "Cookery is a valuable skill for both men and women" (M = 4.72, SD = 0.51)—demonstrates a strong consensus among students that culinary skills are universally relevant. This reflects

a growing recognition of cookery as a life skill and professional asset, rather than a gendered domestic task. Additionally, the statement "I feel confident pursuing cookery even if it is seen as gendered" (M = 4.08, SD = 0.86) suggests that students, particularly males, are developing resilience against gender-based stigma, though qualitative data indicate that this confidence may still be tempered by social pressures.

Overall, the findings suggest that while gendered perceptions of cookery remain embedded in societal discourse, students are increasingly asserting their agency and reframing the strand as a legitimate and inclusive educational choice. This shift underscores the importance of reinforcing gender-neutral messaging in both pedagogy and policy to sustain and accelerate this cultural transformation.

Section C: Participation and Motivation

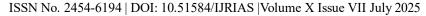| Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
7. I chose the Cookery strand because I am passionate about food preparation.	4.25	0.83	Agree
8. My family influenced my decision to take cookery.	3.67	1.09	Neutral to Agree
9. I believe cookery will help me find a job in the future.	4.38	0.72	Strongly Agree
10. I feel equally treated in class regardless of my gender.	4.11	0.89	Agree
11. I actively participate in cookery activities and assessments.	4.46	0.65	Strongly Agree

Interpretation: The data reveal that students' engagement in the Cookery strand is primarily driven by intrinsic motivation and pragmatic career considerations. The high mean score for the statement "I chose the Cookery strand because I am passionate about food preparation" (M = 4.25, SD = 0.83) underscores the role of personal interest as a key determinant in strand selection. This aligns with Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) Expectancy-Value Theory, which posits that students are more likely to pursue academic paths they find personally meaningful and expect to succeed in.

Moreover, the strong agreement with the statement "I believe cookery will help me find a job in the future" (M = 4.38, SD = 0.72) highlights the perceived employability of culinary skills, suggesting that students view the strand not only as a passion-driven choice but also as a viable economic opportunity. This dual motivation—personal fulfillment and future livelihood—reflects a growing recognition of cookery as a professional and entrepreneurial pathway rather than a gendered domestic role.

Family influence, while present (M = 3.67, SD = 1.09), appears to be less decisive, indicating that students are exercising agency in their educational choices. This may signal a shift away from traditional familial expectations, particularly in contexts where gender norms have historically shaped vocational decisions.

The statement "I feel equally treated in class regardless of my gender" (M = 4.11, SD = 0.89) suggests that students generally perceive the classroom environment as inclusive. This is further supported by the high level of active participation reported (M = 4.46, SD = 0.65), which may be attributed to supportive teaching practices and a curriculum that, while not fully gender-transformative, allows for equitable engagement.

Collectively, these findings indicate that students in the Cookery strand are motivated by a blend of passion, purpose, and perceived opportunity. While gender norms continue to influence broader perceptions of the strand, the data suggest that students are increasingly navigating these norms with confidence and autonomy.

Section D: Institutional and Teacher Influence

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
12. My teacher uses examples that are inclusive of both genders.	4.02	0.84	Agree
13. The cookery curriculum promotes gender equality.	3.88	0.91	Agree
14. I have seen gender stereotypes being challenged in class.	3.74	1.02	Neutral to Agree
15. I feel supported by my teacher regardless of my gender.	4.33	0.69	Strongly Agree

Interpretation: The findings suggest that institutional and pedagogical practices play a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of gender inclusivity within the Cookery strand. The high mean score for the statement "I feel supported by my teacher regardless of my gender" (M = 4.33, SD = 0.69) indicates that students overwhelmingly perceive their teachers as affirming and equitable. This perception of teacher support is critical, as it fosters a psychologically safe learning environment where students of all genders can participate confidently and authentically.

The statement "My teacher uses examples that are inclusive of both genders" also received a favorable mean score (M = 4.02, SD = 0.84), suggesting that many educators are making conscious efforts to integrate gender-inclusive content into their instruction. However, the slightly lower score for "The cookery curriculum promotes gender equality" (M = 3.88, SD = 0.91) points to a potential disconnect between teacher practices and the formal curriculum. This may reflect the broader critique in the literature that while GAD principles are embedded in policy, their translation into curriculum content remains inconsistent (Talon, Carreon, & Diragen, 2020).
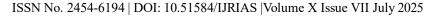
Notably, the lowest mean in this section was observed for the statement "I have seen gender stereotypes being challenged in class" (M = 3.74, SD = 1.02), indicating that while inclusivity is present, it may not be explicitly transformative. This suggests that although teachers are perceived as supportive, they may not consistently engage in deliberate, critical pedagogy aimed at deconstructing gender norms. The relatively high standard deviation further implies variability in student experiences, possibly influenced by differences in teacher training, school culture, or instructional materials.

Overall, the data underscore the importance of equipping educators with the tools and training necessary to move beyond passive inclusivity toward active gender equity. While students generally feel supported, the findings highlight the need for more intentional efforts to challenge stereotypes and embed gender-responsive pedagogy within both instruction and curriculum design.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

Research Question: Is there a significant association between students' gender and their perception that "Cookery is more suitable for females than males"?

Response	Male (n = 56)	Female (n = 92)	Total
Strongly Disagree / Disagree (1–2)	22	14	36
Neutral (3)	14	20	34
Agree / Strongly Agree (4–5)	20	58	78
Total	56	92	150

Degrees of Freedom (df): 2

Chi-Square Value (χ^2): 10.24

p-value: 0.006

Interpretation: Since the p-value (0.006) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant association between gender and the perception that cookery is more suitable for females. Male students are more likely to disagree with the gendered perception of cookery, while female students are more likely to agree or strongly agree, possibly reflecting internalized norms or social reinforcement.

Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses from students, teachers, and GAD coordinators revealed four dominant themes:

Theme 1: Motivation and Personal Interest

A majority of students (n ≈ 95) cited personal passion for cooking as their primary reason for choosing the Cookery strand. Many described cooking as a creative outlet or a skill they had developed at home.

"I've always loved preparing food for my family. I wanted to learn more and maybe open a small food business someday." – Female, Grade 12

"Cooking is something I enjoy, regardless of what people say. I feel proud when I create something delicious." – Male, Grade 11

Some students (n ≈ 30) also mentioned career aspirations in the culinary or hospitality industry as a motivating factor.

Theme 2: Gender-Based Experiences and Perceptions

Responses revealed that gender perceptions still influence how students' choices are viewed by others, particularly for male students. About 40% of male respondents reported experiencing teasing or judgment from peers or relatives.

"Some of my classmates laughed when I said I was taking cookery. They said it's for girls." – Male, Grade 11

"My parents were supportive, but my uncles said I should have taken automotive instead." – Male, Grade 12

In contrast, female students generally felt that their choice was socially accepted, though a few expressed frustration that cookery is often seen as a "default" option for girls.

"People expect girls to take cookery, but I want to be a chef, not just someone who cooks at home." – Female, Grade 12
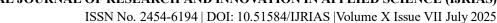
Theme 3: Recommendations for Gender-Inclusive Cookery Education

Students offered thoughtful suggestions to make cookery education more inclusive and empowering. Common recommendations included:

Highlighting male role models in the culinary industry (e.g., chefs, entrepreneurs)

Using gender-neutral language in lessons and materials

Encouraging male participation through school campaigns or peer mentoring

Integrating entrepreneurship and innovation to elevate the strand's perceived value

"It would help if teachers showed examples of successful male chefs. That would make it feel more normal for boys." – Male, Grade 11

"We should learn how to start a food business, not just how to cook. That would make people respect this strand more." – Female, Grade 12

Theme 4: Institutional Gaps and Teacher Strategies

Teachers and GAD coordinators acknowledged persistent gender stereotypes and shared strategies for promoting inclusivity:

Assigning leadership roles to all genders

Integrating GAD topics into homeroom and TLE discussions

Using inclusive language and diverse examples

However, they also noted gaps in curriculum content and the need for mandatory GAD training.

"The curriculum is still silent on gender issues. It doesn't challenge stereotypes directly."

– TVL Teacher

"Not all teachers are trained in GAD. Some still use gendered language unconsciously."
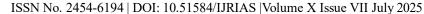
– GAD Coordinator

DISCUSSION

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data in this study provides a nuanced understanding of how gender perceptions influence student participation and experiences in the Cookery strand of the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track. The findings reveal both persistent gendered assumptions and emerging shifts in student attitudes, shaped by personal motivation, institutional support, and broader societal norms.

Gendered Perceptions and Participation Patterns

Quantitative results show that a significant proportion of students (52%) agreed or strongly agreed that cookery is more suitable for females than males, with a statistically significant association between gender and this perception (χ^2 = 10.24, p = 0.006). This aligns with TESDA's (2019) national profile and the findings of Francisco (2021), which highlight the enduring influence of gender stereotypes in vocational education.

However, the high mean score for the statement "Cookery is a valuable skill for both men and women" (M = 4.72) suggests that students are increasingly recognizing the universal value of culinary skills. Qualitative responses reinforce this duality: while male students reported experiencing teasing or discouragement, they also expressed pride in their decision to pursue cookery. Female students, meanwhile, often felt their choice was expected or undervalued.

These narratives reflect the internalization of gender norms described in Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), but also point to a growing resistance to such norms among youth. The inclusion of Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) further supports the finding that students are more likely to pursue strands they value and expect to succeed in—regardless of gendered expectations.

Motivation and Career Aspirations

Students' motivations for choosing cookery were largely intrinsic. Many cited personal passion, creativity, and the desire to pursue culinary careers or entrepreneurship as key drivers. This supports the idea that vocational identity is not solely shaped by gender norms but also by individual agency and aspiration.

Interestingly, 45.3% of students indicated a clear intention to pursue a career in the food industry, while 27.3% were undecided. This suggests that while cookery is still perceived through a gendered lens, it is also increasingly viewed as a viable and respectable career path—especially when linked to entrepreneurship and innovation (Sapungan, 2025).

Institutional and Pedagogical Influences

The role of teachers and curriculum design emerged as a critical factor in shaping students' experiences. Students generally felt supported by their teachers (M = 4.33) and observed the use of gender-inclusive examples (M = 4.02). However, fewer students strongly agreed that gender stereotypes were actively challenged in class (M = 3.74), suggesting that inclusivity is present but not always transformative.

Teachers and GAD coordinators echoed this sentiment. While many reported using inclusive strategies, they also noted that the curriculum lacks explicit content on gender equity. This gap between policy and practice is consistent with the findings of Talon, Carreon, and Diragen (2020), and highlights the need for mandatory GAD training and curriculum reform.

Toward a Gender-Inclusive Cookery Curriculum

Both students and educators offered actionable recommendations to enhance gender inclusivity in cookery education. These include:

Revising cookery modules to include gender-sensitive content and diverse role models

Conducting school-wide campaigns to normalize male participation

Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation to elevate the strand's perceived value

Institutionalizing GAD training for all TVL educators

These suggestions reflect a shift from reactive to proactive strategies and align with global best practices outlined by the OECD (2019) and UNESCO-UNEVOC (2021). They also reinforce the importance of a whole-school approach to gender equity.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how gender perceptions influence student participation and experiences in the Cookery strand of the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track in Philippine senior high schools. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the research integrated quantitative data from 150 students with qualitative insights from 10 TVL Cookery teachers and 5 GAD coordinators, offering a comprehensive view of the sociocultural and institutional dynamics at play.

The findings illuminate a nuanced interplay between entrenched gender norms, institutional practices, and student agency. While traditional perceptions continue to frame cookery as a feminized domain, these views are increasingly being challenged by students' intrinsic motivations, evolving aspirations, and the supportive practices of gender-aware educators. Notably, male students who pursue cookery often do so in defiance of societal expectations, while female students express a desire to reframe the strand as a professional and entrepreneurial pathway rather than a domestic default.
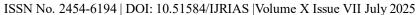
The study underscores that inclusive, gender-responsive education is not merely a policy imperative but a transformative force for individual empowerment and social equity. Teachers play a pivotal role in this transformation, yet their efforts must be supported by curriculum reform, institutional accountability, and sustained professional development in gender sensitivity.

As the Philippines continues to align its education system with global frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), addressing gender disparities in TVL programs—particularly in strands like cookery—remains both a strategic and moral imperative. Advancing gender equity in vocational education will not only broaden students' career horizons but also contribute to a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient workforce.

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